

Tuesday Night Book Group Selections for 2014-15

April 15, 2014: Breakfast with Buddha by Roland Merullo

When his sister tricks him into taking her guru on a trip to their childhood home, Otto Ringling, a confirmed skeptic, is not amused. Six days on the road with an enigmatic holy man who answers every question with a riddle is not what he'd planned. But in an effort to westernize his passenger—and amuse himself—he decides to show the monk some "American fun" along the way. From a chocolate factory in Hershey to a bowling alley in South Bend, from a Cubs game at Wrigley field to his family farm near Bismarck, Otto is given the remarkable opportunity to see his world—and more important, his life—through someone else's eyes. Gradually, skepticism yields to amazement as he realizes that his companion might just be the real thing.

In Roland Merullo's masterful hands, Otto tells his story with all the wonder, bemusement, and wry humor of a man who unwittingly finds what he's missing in the most unexpected place.

May 13, 2014: Still Life by Louise Penny

Chief Inspector Armand Gamache of the Surêté du Québec and his team of investigators are called in to the scene of a suspicious death in a rural village south of Montreal. Jane Neal, a local fixture in the tiny hamlet of Three Pines, just north of the U.S. border, has been found dead in the woods. The locals are certain it's a tragic hunting accident and nothing more, but Gamache smells something foul in these remote woods, and is soon certain that Jane Neal died at the hands of someone much more sinister than a careless bowhunter.

Still Life introduces not only an engaging series hero in Inspector Gamache, who commands his forces---and this series---with integrity and quiet courage, but also a winning and talented new writer of traditional mysteries in the person of Louise Penny.

June 10, 2014 South of Broad by Pat Conroy

Leopold Bloom King has been raised in a family shattered—and shadowed—by tragedy. Lonely and adrift, he searches for something to sustain him and finds it among a tightly knit group of high school outsiders. Surviving marriages happy and troubled, unrequited loves and unspoken longings, hard-won successes and devastating breakdowns, as well as Charleston, South Carolina's dark legacy of racism and class divisions, these friends will endure until a final test forces them to face something none of them are prepared for.

Spanning two turbulent decades, *South of Broad* is Pat Conroy at his finest: a masterpiece from a great American writer whose passion for life and language knows no bounds.

July 8, 2014 Beautiful Ruins by Jess Walters

Jess Walter's *Beautiful Ruins* is a gorgeous, glamorous novel set in 1960s Italy and a modern Hollywood studio. The story begins in 1962. Somewhere on a rocky patch of the sun-drenched Italian coastline a young innkeeper, chest-deep in daydreams, looks out over the incandescent waters of the Ligurian Sea and views an apparition: a beautiful woman, a vision in white, approaching him on a boat. She is an American starlet, he soon learns, and she is dying. And the story begins again today, half a world away in Hollywood, when an elderly Italian man shows up on a movie studio's back lot searching for the woman he last saw at his hotel fifty years before. Gloriously inventive, funny, tender and constantly surprising, *Beautiful Ruins* is a novel full of fabulous and yet very flawed people, all of them striving towards another sort of life, a future that is both delightful and yet, tantalizingly, seems just out of reach.

August 12, 2014 *The Dry Grass of August* by Anna Jean Mayhew

In this beautifully written debut, Anna Jean Mayhew offers a riveting depiction of Southern life in the throes of segregation, what it will mean for a young girl on her way to adulthood--and for the woman who means the world to her. . . On a scorching day in August 1954, thirteen-year-old Jubie Watts leaves Charlotte, North Carolina, with her family for a Florida vacation. Crammed into the Packard along with Jubie are her three siblings, her mother, and the family's black maid, Mary Luther. For as long as Jubie can remember, Mary has been there--cooking, cleaning, compensating for her father's rages and her mother's benign neglect, and loving Jubie unconditionally. Bright and curious, Jubie takes note of the anti-integration signs they pass, and of the racial tension that builds as they journey further south. But she could never have predicted the shocking turn their trip will take. Now, in the wake of tragedy, Jubie must confront her parents' failings and limitations, decide where her own convictions lie, and make the tumultuous leap to independence. . . Infused with the intensity of a changing time, here is a story of hope, heartbreak, and the love and courage that can transform us--from child to adult, from wounded to indomitable.

September 9, 2014 *Sin Killer* by Larry McMurtry

From Pulitzer Prize-winning author Larry McMurtry comes the first leg of an epic journey through the early American frontier, introducing a pioneer family the likes of which you will never forget. It is 1830, and the Berrybender family -- rich, aristocratic, English, and hopelessly out of place -- is on its way up the Missouri River to see the untamed West as it begins to open up. With irascible determination -- and a great deal of outright chaos -- the party experiences both the awesome majesty and brutal savagery of the unexplored land, from buffalo stampedes and natural disasters to Indian raids and encounters with frontiersmen and trappers, explorers, pioneers, and one part-time preacher known as "the Sin Killer." Packed with breathtaking adventure, charming romance, and a sense of humor stretching clear over the horizon, *Sin Killer* is a truly unique view of the West that could only come from the boundless skill and imagination of Larry McMurtry.

October 14, 2014 *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro

From the Booker Prize-winning author of ***The Remains of the Day*** and ***When We Were Orphans***, comes an unforgettable edge-of-your-seat mystery that is at once heartbreakingly tender and morally courageous about what it means to be human.

Hailsham seems like a pleasant English boarding school, far from the influences of the city. Its students are well tended and supported, trained in art and literature, and become just the sort of people the world wants them to be. But, curiously, they are taught nothing of the outside world and are allowed little contact with it. Within the grounds of Hailsham, Kathy grows from schoolgirl to young woman, but it's only when she and her friends Ruth and Tommy leave the safe grounds of the school (as they always knew they would) that they realize the full truth of what Hailsham is.

Never Let Me Go breaks through the boundaries of the literary novel. It is a gripping mystery, a beautiful love story, and also a scathing critique of human arrogance and a moral examination of how we treat the vulnerable and different in our society. In exploring the themes of memory and the impact of the past, Ishiguro takes on the idea of a possible future to create his most moving and powerful book to date.

November 18, 2014 *The Lowland* by Jumpa Lahiri

National Book Award Finalist. Shortlisted for the 2013 Man Booker Prize. From the Pulitzer Prize-winning, best-selling author of *The Namesake* comes an extraordinary new novel, set in both India and America, that expands the scope and range of one of our most dazzling storytellers: a tale of two brothers bound by tragedy, a fiercely brilliant woman haunted by her past, a country torn by revolution, and a love that lasts long past death. Born just fifteen months apart, Subhash and Udayan Mitra are inseparable brothers, one often mistaken for the other in the Calcutta neighborhood where they grow up. But they are also opposites, with gravely different futures ahead. It is the 1960s, and Udayan—charismatic and impulsive—finds himself drawn to the Naxalite movement, a rebellion waged to

eradicate inequity and poverty; he will give everything, risk all, for what he believes. Subhash, the dutiful son, does not share his brother's political passion; he leaves home to pursue a life of scientific research in a quiet, coastal corner of America. But when Subhash learns what happened to his brother in the lowland outside their family's home, he goes back to India, hoping to pick up the pieces of a shattered family, and to heal the wounds Udayan left behind—including those seared in the heart of his brother's wife. Masterly suspenseful, sweeping, piercingly intimate, *The Lowland* is a work of great beauty and complex emotion; an engrossing family saga and a story steeped in history that spans generations and geographies with seamless authenticity. It is Jhumpa Lahiri at the height of her considerable powers.

December 9, 2014

January 13, 2015

February 10, 2015 Washington Square by Henry James

The shy and sweet daughter of a well-to-do physician, Catherine Sloper seems destined for lifelong spinsterhood until the sudden appearance of a dashing suitor who proposes marriage. Her adored father suspects the would-be fiance of fortune-hunting and threatens her with disinheritance, forcing Catherine to choose between lover and father.

March 10, 2015

April 14, 2015